

THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

MAHAYANA AND HINAYANA BUDDHISM,
OR THE BODHISATTVA-IDEAL AND THE
ŚRĀVAKA-IDEAL AS DISTINGUISHED IN
THE OPENING CHAPTER OF THE
GAṆḌAVYŪHA*

1

When we come to the *Gaṇḍavyūha* after the *Laṅkāvatāra*, or the *Vajracchedhika*, or the *Parinirvāṇa*, or even after the *Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka*, or the *Sukhāvatīvyūha*, we find a complete change of the stage where the great religious drama of Mahayana Buddhism is enacted. There is nothing cold here, nothing grey, nothing earth-coloured, nothing humanly mean; for everything one touches in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* shines out in an unsurpassable manner. We are no more in this world of limitation, adumbration, and obduracy; we are miraculously lifted up among the heavenly galaxies. The ethereal world is luminosity itself. Here is no sombreness of earthly Jetavana, no disreputableness of the dry-grass seat on which the Lion of the Śākya probably sat

* The *Gaṇḍavyūha* or *Avatamsaka*, comprehensively known as 華嚴經 (*hua-yen-ching*) in Chinese, represents a great school of Mahayana thought. Traditionally, the Sutra is believed to have been delivered by the Buddha while he was in deep meditation after the Enlightenment. In this Sutra the Buddha gives no personal discourses on any subject except giving the sanction, "Sādhu! Sādhu!" to the statements made by the attending Bodhisattvas such as Mañjuśrī or Samantabhadra, or emitting rays of supernatural light from the various parts of his body as required by the occasion. The Sanskrit *Gaṇḍavyūha* exclusively treats of the pilgrimage of Sudhana under the direction of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. The young pilgrim-aspirant for Supreme Enlightenment visits one teacher after another, amounting to more than fifty in number. The object is to find out what constitutes the life of devotion as practised by a Bodhisattva.

when preaching; here is no group of shabbily-dressed mendicants listening to a discourse on the unreality of an individual ego-soul. When the Buddha enters into a certain kind of Samādhi, the pavilion where he is situated all of a sudden expands to the fullest limits of the universe; in other words, the universe itself is dissolved in the being of the Buddha. The universe is the Buddha, and the Buddha is the universe. And this is not mere expanse of Emptiness, nor is it the shrivelling-up of it into an atom; for the ground is paved with diamonds; the pillars, beams, railings, etc. are inlaid with all kinds of precious stones and gems sparkling brilliantly and each reflecting others glitteringly.

Not only is the universe of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* not on this side of existence, but the audience surrounding the Buddha is not a mortal one. The Bodhisattvas, the Śrāvakas, and even the worldly lords who are assembling here are all spiritual beings. Though the Śrāvakas and lords and their followers do not fully comprehend the signification of the miracles going on about them, none of them are those whose minds are still under the bondage of ignorance and folly. If they were, they could not even be present at this extraordinary scene.

How does all this come about?

The compilation of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* was made possible owing to a definite change which took place in the mind of the Buddha concerning life and the world. Thus in the study of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, what is most essential to know is that the Buddha is no more living in the world which can be conceived in terms of space and time. His consciousness is not that of an ordinary mind which must be regulated according to the senses and logic. Nor is it a product of poetical imagination which creates its own images and methods of dealing with particular objects. The Buddha of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* lives in a spiritual world.

In this world there is no time-division such as the past, present, and future; for they have contracted themselves

into a single moment of the present where life quivers in its true sense. The conception of time as an objective blank in which particular events as its contents succeed one after another has completely vanished. The Buddha in the *Gaṇḍa* thus knows no time-continuity, the past and future are both rolled up in this present moment of illumination, and this present moment is not something standing still with all its contents, for it ceaselessly moves on. Thus the past is the present, so is the future, but this present in which the past and the future are merged never remains the present; in other words, it is eternally present. And at the centre of this eternal present the Buddha has fixed his abode which is no abode.

As with time, so with space. Space in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* is not an extension divided by mountains and forests, rivers and oceans, lights and shades, the visible and the invisible. Extension is here indeed, as there is no contraction of space into one single block of existence; but what we have here is an infinite mutual fusion or penetration of all things, each with its individuality yet with something universal in it. A general fusion thus taking place is the practical annihilation of space which is recognisable only through change and division and impenetrability. To illustrate this state of existence, the *Gaṇḍavyūha* makes everything it depicts transparent and luminous, for luminosity is the only possible earthly representation that conveys the idea of universal interpenetration, the ruling topic of the Sutra. A world of lights transcending distance, opacity, and ugliness of all sorts, is the world of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*.

With the annihilation of space and time, there evolves a realm of imagelessness or shadowlessness (*anābhāsa*). As long as there are lights and shades, the principle of individuation always overwhelms us human mortals. In the *Gaṇḍavyūha* there is no shadowiness; it is true, there are rivers, flowers, trees, nets, banners, etc. in the land of purity, in the description of which the compiler taxes his human

imagination to its utmost limits; but no shadows are visible here anywhere. The clouds themselves are luminous bodies—so many of them overhanging in the Jetavana of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*—which are described in terms of Mahayana world-conception.

This universe of luminosity, the scene of interpenetration, is known as Dharmadhātu in contrast to Lokadhātu which is this world of particulars. In the Dharmadhātu there are space and time and individual beings as in the Lokadhātu, but they show none of their earthly characteristics of separateness and obduracy as are perceivable in the latter. For the Dharmadhātu is not a universe spatially or temporarily constructed like the Lokadhātu, and yet it is not utter blankness or mere void which is identifiable with absolute non-entity. The Dharmadhātu is a real existence and not separated from the Lokadhātu, only it is not the same as the latter, it is realisable when the solid outlines of individuality melt away and the feeling of finiteness no more oppresses one. The *Gaṇḍavyūha* is thus also known as the “Entering into the Dharmadhātu.”

2

What are then some of the chief changes of thought that have taken place in Buddhism enabling it to evolve a universe to be known as Dharmadhātu? What are those feelings and ideas which have entered into the consciousness of the inhabitants of the Dharmadhātu? In short, what are the Mahayana qualifications of the Tathagata, Bodhisattva, and Śrāvaka? As far as the opening chapter of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* is concerned, the following points may be noted.

1. The one dominant feeling, we may almost assert, that runs through the text is an active sense of grand inscrutable mystery (*acintya*), going beyond the power of thinking and description. Everything one sees, hears, or observes in the Dharmadhātu is a mystery, because it is incomprehensible to ordinary sense or logical measurement.

Jetavana of so many square miles abruptly expands to the ends of the universe—does this not surpass human conception? A Bodhisattva comes from a world lying even beyond the furthest end of the universe, that is, beyond an ocean of worlds as innumerable as particles of atoms constituting a Buddha-land—is this not a wonderful event? And let us remind you that this Bodhisattva is accompanied by his retinues as innumerable as the number of atoms constituting a Buddha-land, and again that these visitors are coming from all the ten quarters, accompanied not only by their innumerable retinues but surrounded by luminous clouds, shining banners, etc. Depict all this in your own minds exercising all the power of imagination that you can command—is it not really a most miraculous sight altogether transcending human thought? All that the poor writer of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* can say is “inconceivable” (*acintya*) and “indescribable” (*anabhilāpya*). The miracles performed are not of such local or partial nature as we encounter in most religious literature. Miracles so called are ordinarily a man’s walking on water, a stick changing into a tree, a blind man being enabled to see, and so on. Not only are all these miracles recorded in the history of religion quite insignificant in scale when compared with those of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, but they are fundamentally different from the latter; for the latter are possible only when the whole scheme of the universe as we conceive it is altered from its very basis.

2. We are impressed now with the spiritual powers of the Buddha who can achieve all these wonders by merely entering into a certain Samādhi. What are these powers? They are defined thus: 1. The sustaining and inspiring power (*adhiṣṭhāna*) which is given to the Bodhisattva to achieve the end of his life; 2. The power of working miracles (*vikurvita*); 3. The power of ruling (*anubhāva*); 4. The power of the original vow (*pūrvapraṇidhāna*); 5. The power of goodness practised in his former lives (*pūrvasukṛitakuśalamūla*); 6. The power of receiving all good friends

(*kalyāṇamitrapariṅgraha*); 7. The power of pure faith and knowledge (*śraddhāyājñānaviśuddhi*); 8. The power of attaining a highly illuminating faith (*udārādhimuktyavabhāsapratilambha*); 9. The power of purifying the thought of the Bodhisattva (*bodhisattvādhyaśayapariśuddhi*); and 10. The power of earnestly walking towards all-knowledge and original vows (*adhyāśayasarvajñatāpranīdhānaprasthāna*).

3. The fact that it was due to the miraculous power of the Samādhi attained by the Buddha which caused the transformation of the entire city of Jetavana makes one inquire into the nature of the Samādhi. According to the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, the miracle was effected by the strength of a great compassionate heart (*mahākaruṇā*) which constitutes the very essence of the Samādhi; for compassion is its body (*śarīra*), its face (*mukha*), its forehead (*pūrvāṅgama*), and the means of expanding itself all over the universe. Without this great heart of love and compassion, the Buddha's Samādhi, however exalted it may be in every other way, will be of no avail in the enactment of the great spiritual drama so wonderfully described here. This is indeed what characteristically distinguishes the Mahayana from all that has preceded it in the history of Buddhism. Owing to its self-expanding and self-creating power, a great loving heart transforms this earthly world into one of splendour and mutual fusion, and this is where the Buddha is always abiding.

4. The *Gaṇḍavyūha* is in a sense the history of the inner religious consciousness of Samantabhadra the Bodhisattva, whose wisdom-eye (*jñānacakṣus*), life of devotion (*caryā*), and original vows (*pranīdhāna*) make up its contents. Thus all the Bodhisattvas taking part in the establishment of the Dharmadhātu are born (*abhiniryāta*) of the life and vows of Samantabhadra. And Sudhana's chief object of pilgrimage which is told in such details in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* was nothing else than identifying himself with

Samantabhadra the Bodhisattva. When after visiting more than fifty teachers of all sorts he came to Samantabhadra, he was thoroughly instructed by the Bodhisattva as regards his life of devotion, his knowledge, his vows, his miraculous powers, etc.; and when Sudhana realised what all these Buddhist disciplines meant he found himself in complete identity not only with Samantabhadra, but with all the Buddhas, his body filled the universe to its ends, and his life of devotion (*caryā*), his enlightenment (*sambodhi*), his transformation-bodies (*vikurvita*), his revolution of the Dharma-wheel, his eloquence, his voice, his faith, his abode, his love and compassion, and his emancipation and mastery over the world were exactly those of Samantabhadra and all the Buddhas.

What concerns us here most is the idea of vow (*pranidhāna*) which is made by a Bodhisattva in the beginning of his career and which controls all his later life. His vows are concerned with enlightening, or emancipating, or saving all his fellow-beings which include not only sentient beings but the non-sentient. The reason he gives up everything that is ordinarily regarded as belonging to oneself is not to gain a word or a phrase of truth for himself—there is in fact no such thing in the great ocean of reality; what he wants to accomplish by his life of self-sacrifice is to lead all beings to final emancipation, to a state of happiness which is not of this world, to make the light of knowledge illuminate the whole universe, and to see all the Buddhas praised and adored by all beings. This is what is absorbingly interesting in the life of devotion practised by Samantabhadra the Bodhisattva.

3

Reference was made to the sense of mystery which pervades the whole text of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* as one of its striking characteristics. I want now to fathom this and point out where it originates, that is, what is its philosophical

background. For the *Gaṇḍavyūha* has its own view of the world and the mind, and it is based on this philosophical view that so many miracles, mysteries, or inconceivabilities succeed one after another in a most wonderful manner—which to many may appear to be altogether too fantastic, too beyond the reach of common sense. But when we grasp the central fact of spiritual experience gone through by the Bodhisattvas as narrated in the Sutra, all the rest of the scenes depicted here suggest perfect naturalness, and there are no irrationalities. The main thing, therefore, for us to do if we desire to understand the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, will be to take hold of its ruling idea.

The ruling idea of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* is known as the doctrine of interpenetration. It is a thought somewhat similar to the Hegelian philosophy of concrete-universals. Each individual reality, besides being itself, reflects in it something of the universal, and at the same time it is itself because of other individuals. A system of perfect relationship exists among individual existences and also between individuals and universals, between particular objects and general ideas. This perfect net-work of mutual relations has received the technical name of interpenetration in the hands of Mahayana philosophers.

When the Empress Tsé-t'ien of T'ang felt it difficult to grasp the meaning of interpenetration, Fa-tsang, the great master of the Avatamsaka school of Buddhism, illustrated it in the following way. He had first a candle lighted, and then encircling it had mirrors on all sides. The central light reflected itself in every one of the mirrors, and every one of these reflected lights was reflected again in every mirror, so that there was a perfect interplay of lights, that is, of concrete-universals. This is said to have enlightened the mind of the Empress. It is necessary to have this kind of philosophy in the understanding of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* or the *Avatamsaka*. The following extracts from the text before us will help us to have a glimpse into its abstruse teaching.

After describing the transformations that took place in Jetavana when the Buddha entered into a Samādhi known as *Simhaviṣṭrīmbhita*, the *Gaṇḍavyūha* goes on to say: "All this is due to the Buddha's miraculous (*acintya*) deeds of goodness, to his miraculous work of purity, to his miraculously mighty power; all this is because he has the miraculous power of transforming his one body and making it pervade the entire universe; it is because he has the miraculous power of making all the Buddhas, all the Buddha-lands with their splendours enter into his own body; it is because he has the miraculous power of manifesting all the images of the Dharmadhātu within one single particle of dust; it is because he has the miraculous power of revealing all the Buddhas of the past with their successive doings within a single pore of his skin; it is because he has the miraculous power of illuminating the entire universe with each one of the rays which emanate from his body; it is because he has the miraculous power of evolving clouds of transformation from a single pore of his skin and making them fill up all the Buddha-lands; it is because he has the miraculous power of revealing in a single pore of his skin the whole history of all the worlds in the ten quarters from their first appearance until their final destruction. It is for these reasons that in this grove of Jetavana are revealed all the purities and splendours of the Buddha-lands."

When all the Bodhisattvas with an inconceivable number of followers come from the ten quarters of the world and begin to get settled around the Buddha, the *Gaṇḍavyūha* explains for its readers who are these Bodhisattvas miraculously assembling here accompanied mostly by luminous clouds, and gives among others the following characterisation of the Bodhisattvas:

"All these Bodhisattvas from the ten quarters of the world together with their retinues are born of the life and vows of Samantabhadra the Bodhisattva. By means of their pure wisdom-eye they see all the Buddhas of the past,

present, and future, and also hear the ocean of the Sutras and the revolving of the Dharma-wheel by all the Buddhas. They are all masters of the excellent Pāramitās; they approach and serve all the Tathagatas who are performing miracles every minute; they are also able to expand their own bodies to the ends of the universe; they bring forth by means of their body of light all the religious assemblies conducted by the Buddha; they reveal in each particle of dust all the worlds, singly and generally, with their different conditions and multitudes; and in these different worlds they choose the most opportune season to discipline all beings and to bring them to maturity; emitting a deep, full sound from every pore of the skin, which reverberates throughout the universe, they discourse on the teachings of all the Buddhas."

All these statements may sound too figurative, too fabulous, too fantastic to be seriously considered by the rationally-minded, so called. From the realistic point of view which upholds objective validity and sense-measurement as the sole standard of truth, the *Gaṇḍavyūha* fares rather ill. But we must remember that there is another point of view, especially in matters spiritual, which pays no attention to the rationalistic interpretation of our inner experiences. The human body, ordinarily or from the sense-point of view, occupies a limited area of space which can be measured, and continues to live also during a measurable period of time. And against this body there is the whole expanse of the universe including all the mountains and oceans on earth and also all the starry heavens. How can this body of ours be made to take in the entire objectivity? How can our insignificant, ignominious "hair-hole" or "pore of the skin" (*romakūpa*) be turned into a holy stage, where all the Tathagatas of the past, present, and future can congregate for their spiritual discourses? Obviously, this is an utter impossibility or the height of absurdity. But the strange fact is that when a door opens and a light shines from an unknown source into the dark chamber of conscious-

ness, all the time- and space-limitations dissolve away, and we make a Simhanāda (lion-roar), "Before Abraham was I am", or "I alone am the honoured one above and below all the heavens." The *Gaṇḍavyūha* is written always from this exalted point of view. If science surveys the objective world, and philosophy unravels intricacies of logic, Buddhism dives into the very abyss of being, and tells us in the directest possible manner all it sees under the surface.

4

Having acquainted ourselves with the general atmosphere in which the *Gaṇḍavyūha* moves, let us now proceed to see what are the constituents of the audience, that is, what are the particular characteristics of Bodhisattvahood as distinguished from those of Śrāvakahood. In other words, the question is concerned with the differentia of Mahayana Buddhism. When we know how the Bodhisattva is qualified in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, we know also how Bodhisattvahood differentiates itself from Śrāvakahood and what are the Mahayana thoughts as they are presented in this Sutra against those of the Hinayana. For the opening chapter of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* emphatically sets up the Bodhisattvas against the Śrāvakas giving reasons why the latter are unable to participate like the Bodhisattvas in the development of the grand spiritual life.

The Bodhisattvas numbering five hundred are attending the assembly which takes place under the supervision of the Buddha in Jetavana. The same number of the Śrāvakas are also found among the audience. Of the Śrāvakas such names are mentioned as Śāriputra, Maudgalyāyana, Mahākāśyapa, Revata, Subhūti, Aniruddha, Nandika, Kapphina, Kātyayana, Pūrṇa, Metrāyaṇīputra, etc., while Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī stand out prominently as the two leaders of the five hundred Bodhisattvas. The Bodhisattvas are all qualified as "having issued from the life and vows of Samantabhadra": (1) they are unattached in their conduct because they are

able to expand themselves in all the Buddha-lands; (2) they manifest innumerable bodies because they can go over everywhere there are Buddhas; (3) they are in possession of an unimpeded unspoiled eyesight because they can perceive the miraculous transformations of all the Buddhas; (4) they are able to visit anywhere without bounds because they never neglect appearing in all places where the Buddhas attain to their enlightenment; (5) they are in possession of a limitless light because they can illumine the ocean of all the Buddha-truths with their light of knowledge; (6) they have an inexhaustible power of eloquence through eternity because their speech has no taint; (7) they abide in the highest wisdom which knows no limits like space because their conduct is pure and free from taints; (8) they have no fixed abode because they reveal themselves personally in accordance with the thoughts and desires of all beings; (9) they are free from obscurities because they know that there are really no beings, no soul-substances in the world of beings; and finally (10) they are in possession of transcendental knowledge which is as vast as space because they illuminate all the Dharmadhātus with their net of light.”

In another place where the Bodhisattvas visiting Jetavana from the ten quarters of the universe to contribute their shares in the grand demonstration of the Buddha's spiritual powers are characterised, we find among other things the following statements: “All the Bodhisattvas know that all beings are like *māyā*, that all the Buddhas are like shadows, that all existence with its rise and fall is like a dream, that all forms of karma are like images in a mirror, that the rising of all things is like a *fata morgana*, that all the worlds are mere transformations; further, the Bodhisattvas are all endowed with the ten powers, knowledge, dignity, and faith of the Tathagata, which enable them to roar like a lion; they have deeply delved into the ocean of inexhaustible eloquence, they have acquired the knowledge of explaining the truths for all beings; they are complete

masters of their conduct so that they move about in the world as freely as in space; they are in possession of all the miraculous powers belonging to a Bodhisattva; their strength and energy will crush the army of Māra; their knowledge-power penetrates into the past, present, and future; knowing that all things are like space, they practise non-resistance, and are not attached to them; though they work indefatigably for others, they know that when things are observed from the point of view of all-knowledge, nobody knows whence they come; though they recognise an objective world, they know that its existence is something unobtainable; they enter into all the worlds by means of incorruptible knowledge; in all the worlds they reveal themselves with the utmost freedom; they are born in all the worlds, take all forms; they transform a small area into an extended tract of land, and the latter again into a small area; all the Buddhas are revealed in one single moment of their thought; the powers of all the Buddhas are added on to them; they survey the entire universe in one glance and are not at all confused; they are able to visit all the worlds in one moment."

Against this characterisation of the Bodhisattvas, what have we for that of the five hundred Śrāvakas? According to the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, "They are enlightened in the self-nature of truth and reason, they have an insight into the limit of reality, they have entered into the essence of things, they are out of the ocean of becoming, they abide where the Buddha-merit is stored, they are released from the bondage of the Knots and Passions, they dwell in the house of non-attachment, they stay in the serenity of space, they have their desires, errors, and doubts wiped off by the Buddha, and they are rightly and faithfully devoted to the Buddha-ocean."

When Śrāvakahood is compared with Bodhisattvahood as they are here particularised, we at once perceive how cold, aloof, and philosophical the one is, in great contrast to the

spiritual activities and miraculous movements of the other. The Bodhisattva is always kept busy doing something for others, sometimes spreading himself all over the universe, sometimes appearing in one or another path of existence, sometimes destroying the army of evil ones, sometimes paying reverence and making offerings to the Buddhas of the past, present, and future. And in these movements he is perfectly at home, he goes on everywhere with the utmost ease and spontaneity as nothing impedes his manœuvring as a world-saviour. The Śrāvaka is on the other hand an intellectual recluse, his insight is altogether philosophical and has no religious fervour accompanying it, he is satisfied with what he has attained by himself, and has no desire stirred within himself to let others share also in his spiritual or rather metaphysical realisation. To him the Bodhisattva is much-adoing for nothing. To him the entire world of inconceivabilities is a closed book, and this is the very place where all the Bodhisattvas belong and find their reason of existence. How penetrating and perspicuous may be the intellect of the Śrāvaka, there is still a world altogether beyond his grasp.

This world, to use the *Gaṇḍavyūha* terminology, is where we find the Buddha's transformation (*vikurvita*), orderly arrangements (*vyūha*), superhuman virility (*vrishabha*), playful activities (*vikrīḍita*), miracles (*pratihārya*), sovereignty (*pateyata*), wonderful performances (*caritavikurvita*), supreme power (*prabhāva*), sustaining power (*adhishṭhāna*), and land of purity (*kshetrapariśuddhi*). And again here is where the Bodhisattvas have their realms, their assemblies, their entrances, their comings-together, their visits, their transformations, their miracles, their groups, their quarters, their fine array of lion-seats, their palatial residences, their resting abodes, their transportation in Samādhi, their survey of the worlds, their energetic concentrations, their heroisms, their offerings to the Tathagatas, their certifications, their maturities, their energies, their Dharmakāyas of purity, their

knowledge-bodies of perfection, their vow-bodies in various manifestations, their material bodies in their perfected form, the fulfilment and purification of all their forms, the array of their boundless light-images, the spreading out of their great nets of lights, and the bringing forth of their transformation-clouds, the expansion of their bodies all over the ten quarters, the perfection of all their transformation-deeds, etc.

5

What are the causes and conditions that have come to differentiate Bodhisattvahood so much from Śrāvakahood?

The *Gaṇḍavyūha* does not forget to point out what causes are contributive to this remarkable differentiation, to tell what are the conditions that make the Śrāvakas altogether blind to the various manifestations and transformations going on in a most wonderful way at the assembly of the Bodhisattvas in Jetavana. The *Gaṇḍavyūha* gives the following reasons:

Because the stock of merit is not the same (1); because the Śrāvakas have not seen, and disciplined themselves in, the virtues of the Buddha (2); because they have not approved the notion that the universe is filled with Buddhalands in all the ten quarters where there is a fine array of all Buddhas (3); because they have not given praise to the various wonderful manifestations put forward by the Buddhas (4); because they have not awakened the desire after supreme enlightenment attainable in the midst of transmigration (5); because they have not induced others to cherish the desire after supreme enlightenment (6); because they have not been able to continue the Tathagata-family (7); because they have not taken all beings under their protection (8); because they have not advised others to practise the Pāramitās of the Bodhisattva (9); because while yet in the transmigration of birth and death they have not persuaded others to seek for the most exalted wisdom-eye (10).

Further, because the Śrāvakas have not disciplined themselves in all the stock of merit from which issues all-knowledge (11); because they have not perfected all the stock of merit which makes the appearance of the Buddha possible (12); because they have not added to the enhancement of the Buddha-land by seeking for the knowledge of transformation (13); because they have not entered into the realm which is surveyed by the Bodhisattva-eye (14); because they have not sought the stock of merit which produces an incomparable insight going beyond this world (15); because they have not made any of the vows constituting Bodhisattva-hood (16); because they have not confirmed themselves to all that is the product of the Tathagata's sustaining power (17); because they have not realised that all things are like *māyā* and the Bodhisattvas are like a dream (18); because they have not attained the most exhilarating excitements (*prativega-vivardhana*) of the Bodhisattva (19); in short, because they have not realised all these spiritual states belonging to the wisdom-eye of Samantabhadra to which the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas are strangers (20).

So, concludes the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, all these great Śrāvakas such as Śāriputra, etc. have no stock of merit, no wisdom-eye, no Samādhi, no emancipation, no power of transformation, no sovereignty, no energy, no mastery, no abode, no realm, which enable them to get into the assemblage of the Bodhisattvas and participate in the performance of the great spiritual drama that is going on in Jetavana. As they have sought their deliverance according to the vehicle and way of Śrāvakahood, what they have accomplished does not go beyond Śrāvakahood. They have indeed gained the knowledge whereby the truth is made manifest, they are abiding in the limit of reality (*bhūtakoti*), they are enjoying the serenity of the ultimate (*atyantaśānti*); but they have no great compassionate all-embracing heart for all beings, for they are too intently occupied with their own doings (*ātma-kārya*) and have no mind to accumulate the Bodhisattva-

knowledge and to discipline themselves in it. They have their own realisation and emancipation, but they have no desire, make no vows to make others also find their resting abode in it. They do not thus understand what is really meant by the inconceivable power of the Tathagata.

To sum up, the Śrāvakas are yet under the covering of too great a karma-hindrance, they are unable to cherish such great vows as are done by the Bodhisattvas for the spiritual welfare of all beings, their insight is not clear and penetrating enough to see into all the secrets of life, they have not yet opened what is designated as the wisdom-eye (*jñānacakṣus*) in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, wherewith a Bodhisattva takes in at a glance all the wonders and inconceivabilities of the spiritual realm to its deepest abyss. How superficial, compared to this, is the philosophical insight of the Śrāvakas!

6

The *Gaṇḍavyūha* gives us several parables to tell more graphically about the conditions of Śrāvakahood under which its followers are still labouring. Let me quote one or two.

Along the river Gangā there are millions of millions of hungry ghosts (*preta*) all naked and tormented with hunger and thirst; they feel as if their bodies were burning; and their lives are threatened every minute by birds and beasts of prey. Thirst impels them to seek for water, but they cannot find it anywhere even though they are right close to the river. Some see it, but there is no water but the dried-up bed. Why? Because their karma-hindrance lies too heavy on them. In the same way, these great learned philosophical Śrāvakas, even though they are in the midst of the large assembly of the Bodhisattvas, are not capable of recognising the grand miracles of the Tathagata. For they have relinquished all-knowledge (*sarvajñatā*) owing to the ignorance-cataract covering their eyes; for they have never

planted their stock of merit in the soil of all-knowledge.

In the Himālaya mountains many kinds of medicinal herbs are found, and they are distinguished by an experienced doctor each according to its specific qualities. But all these are not recognised by the hunters, nor by the herdsmen, who may frequent these regions, because they have no eye for them. In the same way, the Bodhisattvas who have entered into a realm of transcendental knowledge and gained a spiritual power over form are able to see the Tathagatas and their grand display of miracles. But the Elders, the Śrāvakas, in the midst of these wonderful events, cannot see them, because they are satisfied only with their own deeds (*svakārya*), and not at all concerned with others' spiritual welfare.

To give another parable: Here is a man in a large congregation of people. He happens to fall asleep, and in a dream he is suddenly transported to the summit of Mount Sumeru where Śakrendra has his magnificent palatial residence. There are a large number of mansions, pavilions, gardens, lakes, etc., each in its full splendour. There are also celestial beings incalculable in number, the grounds are strewn with heavenly flowers, the trees are decorated with beautiful robes, and the flowers are in full bloom. Most exquisite music is played among the trees whose branches and leaves emit of their own accord pleasing sounds, and these go on in harmonious concert with the melodious singing of the celestial damsels. The dancers innumerable and attired in resplendent garments are enjoying themselves on the terrace. The man is now no more a bystander to these scenes, for he is one of the participants himself apparelled in heavenly fashion, and going around among the inhabitants of Sudarśana as if he belonged to them from the beginning.

These phenomena however have never come to be noticed by any other mortals who are congregated here, for what is perceived by the man is a vision only given to him. In a similar manner, the Bodhisattvas are able to see all the

wonderful sights in the world taking place under the direction of the Buddha's power. For they have been accumulating their stock of merit for ever so many kalpas, making vows based on all-knowledge which know no bounds in time and space. For, again, they have studied all the virtues of the Buddhas, disciplining themselves in the way of Bodhisattvahood, and then perfecting themselves for the attainment of all-knowledge. In short, they have fulfilled all the vows of Samantabhadra and lived his life of devotion, whereas the Śrāvakas have no pure insight belonging to the Bodhisattvas.

7

From these quotations and delineations, we have now, I hope, a general background of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* more or less clearly outlined, and from them also we gather the following ideas which are really the contents of at least the opening chapter of the Sutra, while they also give us a further glimpse into the essence of the Mahayana teaching generally.

1. There is a world which is not of this world, though inseparable from it.

2. The world where we ordinarily move is characterised with limitations of all sorts. Each individual reality holds itself against others, which is indeed its self-nature (*svabhāva*). But in the world of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* known as Dharmadhātu, individual realities are enfolded in one great reality, and this great reality is found participated by each individual one. Not only this, but each individual existence contains in itself all other individual existences as such. Thus there is a universal interpenetration so called in the Dharmadhātu.

3. These supernatural phenomena cannot take place in a world where darkness and obduracy prevail, because then a penetration would be impossible. If a penetration should take place in these conditions it would mean the general breaking-up of all individual realities, which is a chaos.

4. Therefore, the Dharmadhātu is a world of lights not accompanied by any form of shade. The essential nature of light is to intermingle without interfering or obstructing or destroying one another. One single light reflects in itself all other lights generally and individually. Thus, light symbolises spirituality.

5. This is not a philosophical interpretation of existence reached by cold logical reasoning, nor is it a symbolical representation of the imagination. It is a world of real spiritual experience.

6. Spiritual experience is like sense-experience. It is direct, and tells us directly all that it has experienced without resorting to imagination or ratiocination. The *Gaṇḍavyūha* is to be understood in this manner, that is, as a document recording one's actual spiritual life.

7. This realm of spirit belongs to the Bodhisattva and not to the Śrāvaka. The latter serenely abides in a world of intellectual intuition and monotony, supremely above the endlessly intermingling world of particulars and multiplicities. The Bodhisattva has a loving heart, and his is a life of devotion and self-sacrifice given up to a world of individualities.

8. A society of spiritual beings is approachable only by means of a great loving heart (*mahākaruṇā*), a great friendly spirit (*mahāmaitrī*), morality (*śīla*), great vows (*prañidhāṇa*), miraculous powers (*abhijñā*), purposelessness (*anabhisamkāra*), perfect disinterestedness (*anāyūha*), skilful means born of transcendental wisdom (*prajñopāya*), and transformations (*nirmāṇa*).^{*}

9. As these attributes are lacking in Śrāvakahood, its devotees are not allowed to join the congregation of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Even when they are in it they are incapable of appreciating all that goes on in such assemblages. The Mahayana is more than mere Emptiness, a great social spirit is moving behind it.

^{*} From Maitreya's instructions given to Sudhana.

10. Lastly, we must remember that there is a sustaining power (*adhiṣṭhāna*) behind all these spiritual phenomena that are going on in Jetavana, and also behind all those transformation-Bodhisattvas who have gathered around the Buddha. This power comes from the Buddha himself. He is the great centre and source of illumination. He is the sun whose light reaches the darkest corners of the universe and yet leaves no shadow anywhere. The Buddha of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* is therefore called Mahāvairocana-Buddha, the Buddha of Great Illumination.

8

In conclusion, let me quote the verse uttered by one of the Bodhisattvas in praise of the virtues of the Buddha, by which we can see in what relationship he stands to his devotees:

“1. The great Muni, the best of the Śākya, is furnished with all the perfect virtues; and those who see him are purified in mind and turn towards the Mahayana.

“2. That the Tathagata appears in the world is to benefit all beings; out of a great compassionate heart he revolves the wheel of the Dharma.

“3. The Buddha has for ages gone through many a heart-rending experience for the sake of sentient beings; and how can they requite him for what they owe him?

“4. Rather suffer in the evil paths of existence all that there is in them for ever so many kalpas, than seek emancipation somewhere else by abandoning the Buddha.

“5. Rather suffer all the pain that may befall all beings, than find comfort where there are no Buddhas to see.

“6. Rather abide in the evil paths of existence if the Buddha's name can all the time be heard, than be born in the pleasant paths and never have the chance to hear him.

“7. Rather be born in the hells however long one has to stay in each one of them, than be delivered therefrom by cutting oneself away from the Buddha.

“8. Why? Because even though one may stay long in the evil paths, one’s wisdom will ever be growing if only the Buddha is to be seen.

“9. When the Buddha, the lord of the world, is to be seen somewhere, all pain will be eradicated; and one will enter into a realm of great wisdom which belongs to the Tathagata.

“10. When the Buddha, the peerless one, is to be seen somewhere, all the hindrances will be cleared away, and infinite bliss will be gained and the way of enlightenment perfected.

“11. When the Buddha is seen, he will cut asunder all the doubts cherished by all beings, and give them satisfaction each according to his aspirations, worldly and super-worldly.”

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